

WESTERN WALLA WALLA COUNTY

TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

December 2002



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PURPOSE OF STUDY

In response to a citizens' petition (342 signatures) and in behalf of Walla Walla County, Valley Transit (Walla Walla) and Ben Franklin Transit (Tri-Cities), the Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla Regional Transportation Planning Organization conducted a public transit feasibility study for western Walla Walla County.

Study funding was facilitated by a federal grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation with local matching funds provided by the above organizations.

STUDY SCOPE

Local interest in services and scope of services wanted were ascertained by a direct mail survey questionnaire and a public meeting. The study delineates service and taxing areas for consideration; addresses revenue options; alternative service methods; and options for governance.

STUDY AREA

The study area for this transit feasibility study is generally defined by postal zip codes 99323 (Burbank) and 99363 (Wallula). And further defined by 2000 census tract 9200, block groups 1, 2 and 3 (see map). The Columbia School District boundary also generally defines the study area, as do voting districts (Burbank, McNary, Ice Harbor, and Wallula).

Burbank is the largest unincorporated community in Walla Walla County. The 2000 census puts the population of the Burbank census designated place at 3,303. SR 12 and the McNary National Wildlife Refuge effectively bisect the community into two distinct districts known as Burbank Townsite and Burbank Heights.

The Townsite of Burbank contains a mixture of single family, heavy industrial, agricultural, commercial and mobile home residential uses. Manufactured homes occupy nearly 50 percent of the residential sites.

Burbank Heights is a rural area north of the Townsite. Parcels generally exceed one acre, except for more dense development overlooking the Snake River. More than 80 percent of the parcels have site built homes, the balance being manufactured homes.

The county does not currently provide water, sewer, or other utility service. Those services are provided by private property owners, private enterprise, or homeowners associations. Fire District No. 5 provides fire protection and emergency medical services through stations in Burbank, Burbank Heights, Wallula, and Sun Harbor Estates.

The Burbank community is served by Columbia School District No. 400. The district provides public education (K-12) for over 900 students through three buildings on a large campus in Burbank. The only sidewalk in the community extends from SR 12 to the school campus.

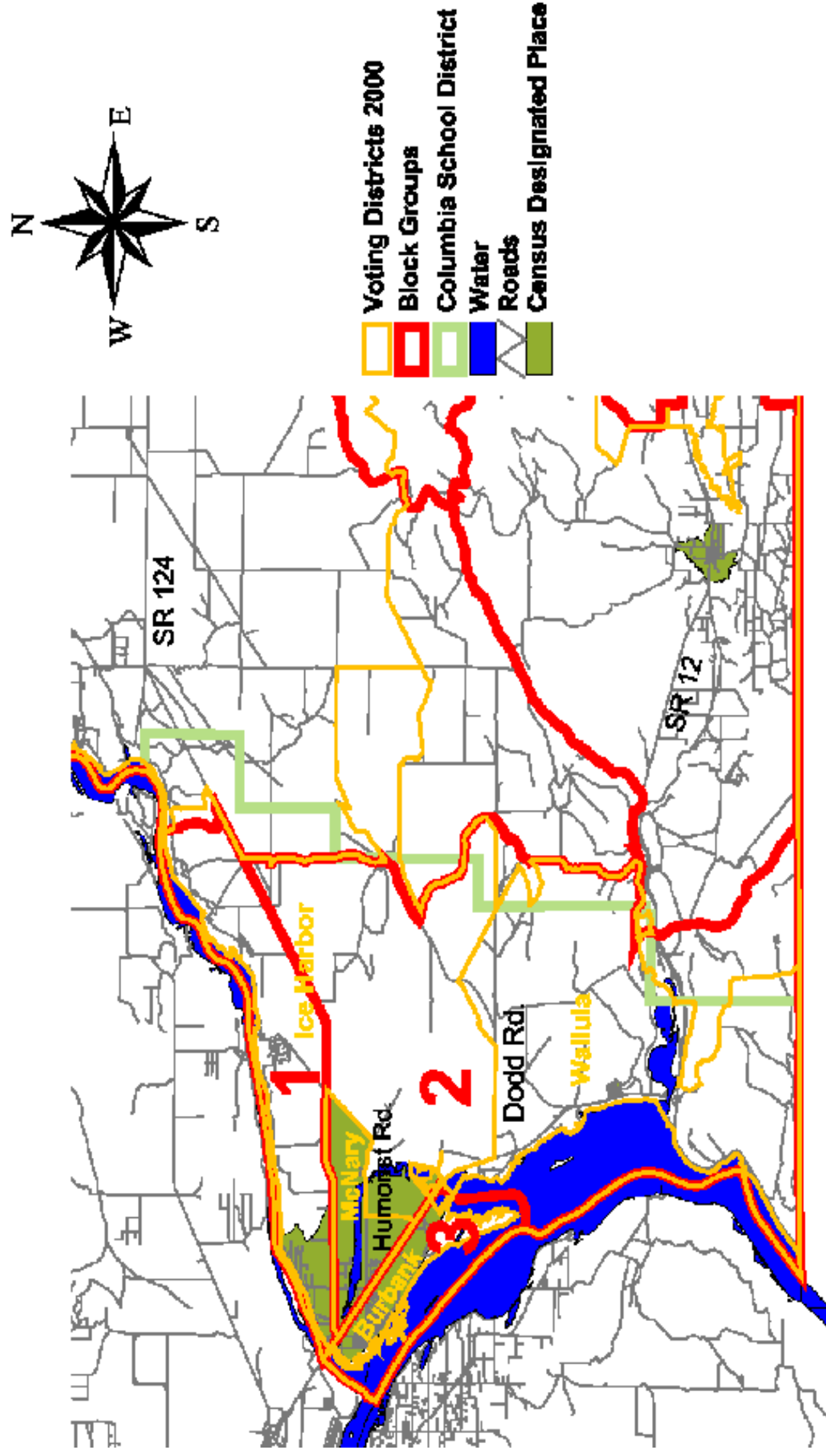
A long-term goal of the Burbank community is incorporation and provision of urban services. The focus is toward maintaining a residential suburban “bedroom community” with land use planning for agricultural, industrial, and commercial purposes to provide employment opportunities and a strong tax base. Another goal is affordable public transportation to Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities.

The Townsite of Wallula is situated about 7 miles south of Burbank and adjacent to SR 12. Wallula is about one-third of a square mile in size and is surrounded by agricultural uses. The 2000 census showed a population of 227, with 86 dwelling units.

Wallula consists mainly of single family residences that are a mixture of site-built and manufactured homes. Services are limited to a fire station, and post office. The community is served by a public water system but no public sewer system. County regulations require a minimum 12,500 square foot lot size to accommodate septic systems and drain fields.

Future growth and expansion is not expected to occur outside the existing platted Townsite. Limited in-fill development is available on some parcels with water connections.

Western Walla Walla County Transit Feasibility Study Area



LAND USE

Study area land use is depicted on the following maps from the Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan. For the most part, the population is clustered in the communities of Burbank, Burbank Heights, and Wallula. Existing and planned industrial uses tend to be orientated toward SR 12 and the Snake and Columbia rivers. Public lands include Hood Park adjacent to SR 12 and the Snake River, the McNary National Wildlife Refuge, and the Walla Walla River delta area. The balance of the study area is agricultural with scattered homesites.

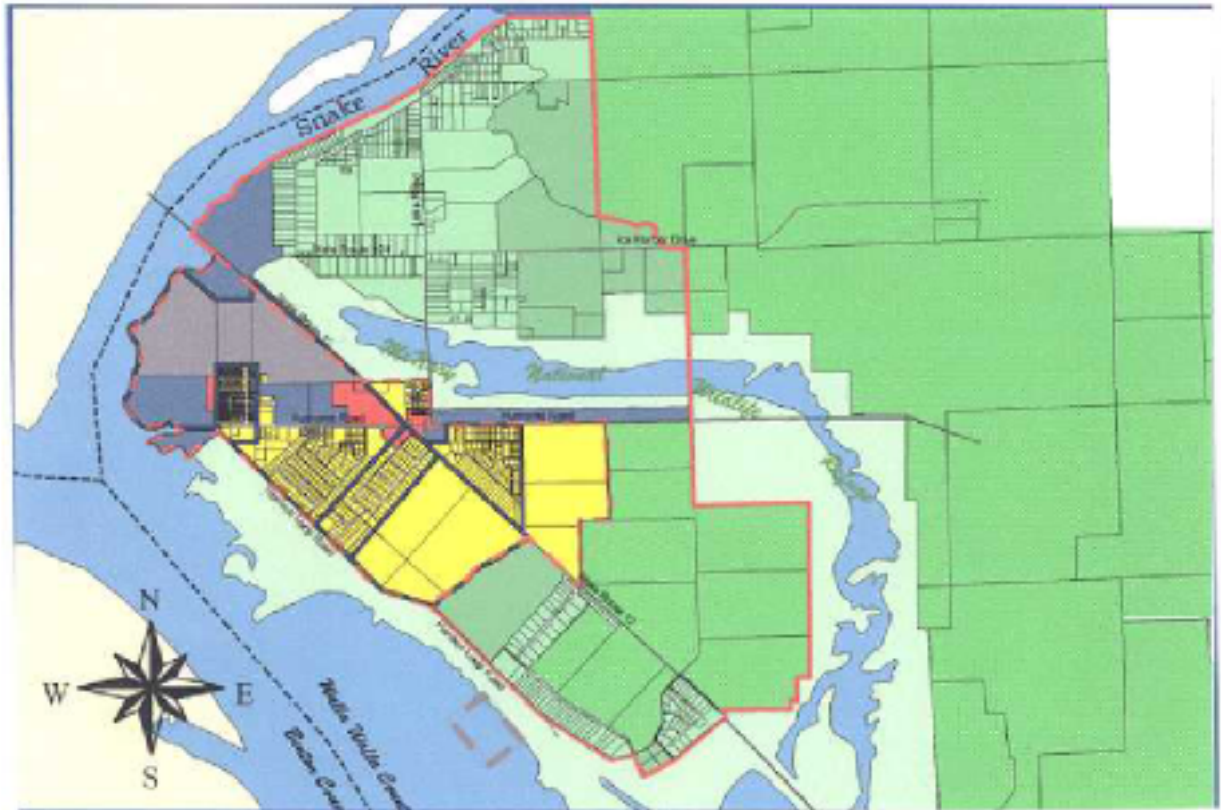
MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Western Walla Walla County's major employers are Broetje Orchards (2000 employees, 750-800 fulltime), Iowa Beef (1,700), Boise's Paper Division (500) and Corrugated Container Division (185), and the Columbia School District (109). Much of the labor force commutes from the Tri-Cities. Broetje Orchards has constructed a small community (Vista Hermosa) for their employees, including 108 family units (600 residents), a pre-school, a school (grades 1-12), a grocery store, a gas station, and a recreation hall. The vast Broetje Orchards complex is situated between the Snake River and SR 124 and about three miles northeast of the study area. Iowa Beef and Boise's mill are situated between Burbank and Wallula.

BFT presently has commuter vans running to Boise (1), Ice Harbor (2), Lower Monumental (1), and McNary (2). The vanpools to the dams are subsidized under the Federal Commuter Benefit Program. In the past there were vanpools to Iowa Beef, However, long work shifts coupled with extended times to pick up and drop off passengers resulted in driver disinterest.



Land Use-- Burbank and Surrounding Area

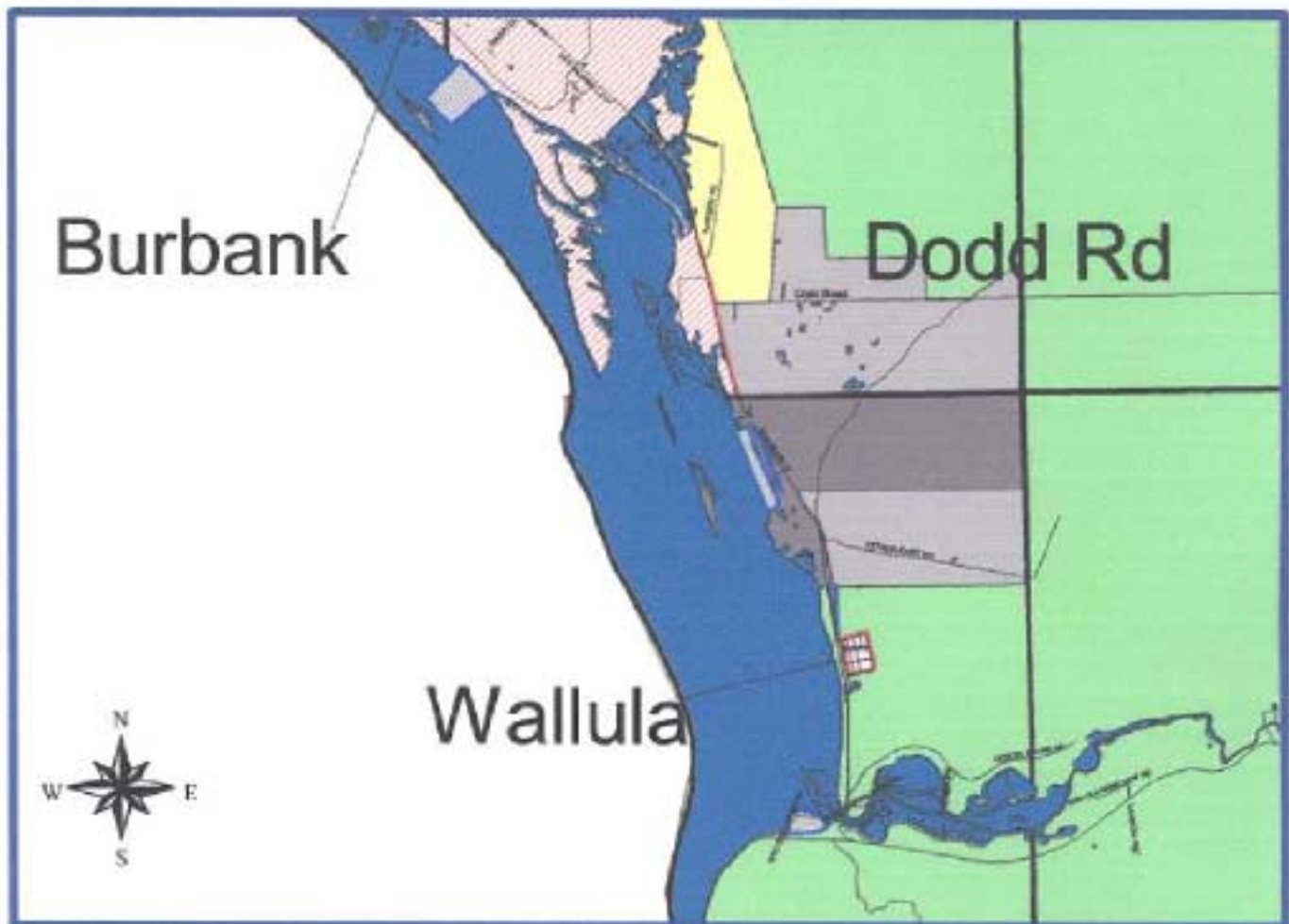


Land Use

	Rural Activity Center		Rural Agriculture 5-10 Acres		Industrial
	Provisionary Burbank UGA		Agricultural Residential 10-20 Acres		Public
	Wildlife Refuge		Residential		
	Rural Residential 2-5		Commercial		



Port Limited Industrial Property



DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2000 census provided much useful and timely information for this study. The study area is defined by census block groups 1 through 3 of tract 9200, which also contain the Burbank and Wallula Census Designated Place(s). The following tabular data addresses population by age groups, households, and transportation to work. The census source data are available on the internet (census.gov).

The study area census population was 3,866. Nearly 31.5 percent was in the 17 and under age group and 5.5 percent in the 70 and over group. Households totaled 1,274 with 322 (25 percent) having at least one occupant aged 60 years or more. The minority population included 46 Native Americans, 402 Hispanic or Latino, 16 Black, and 45 Asian.

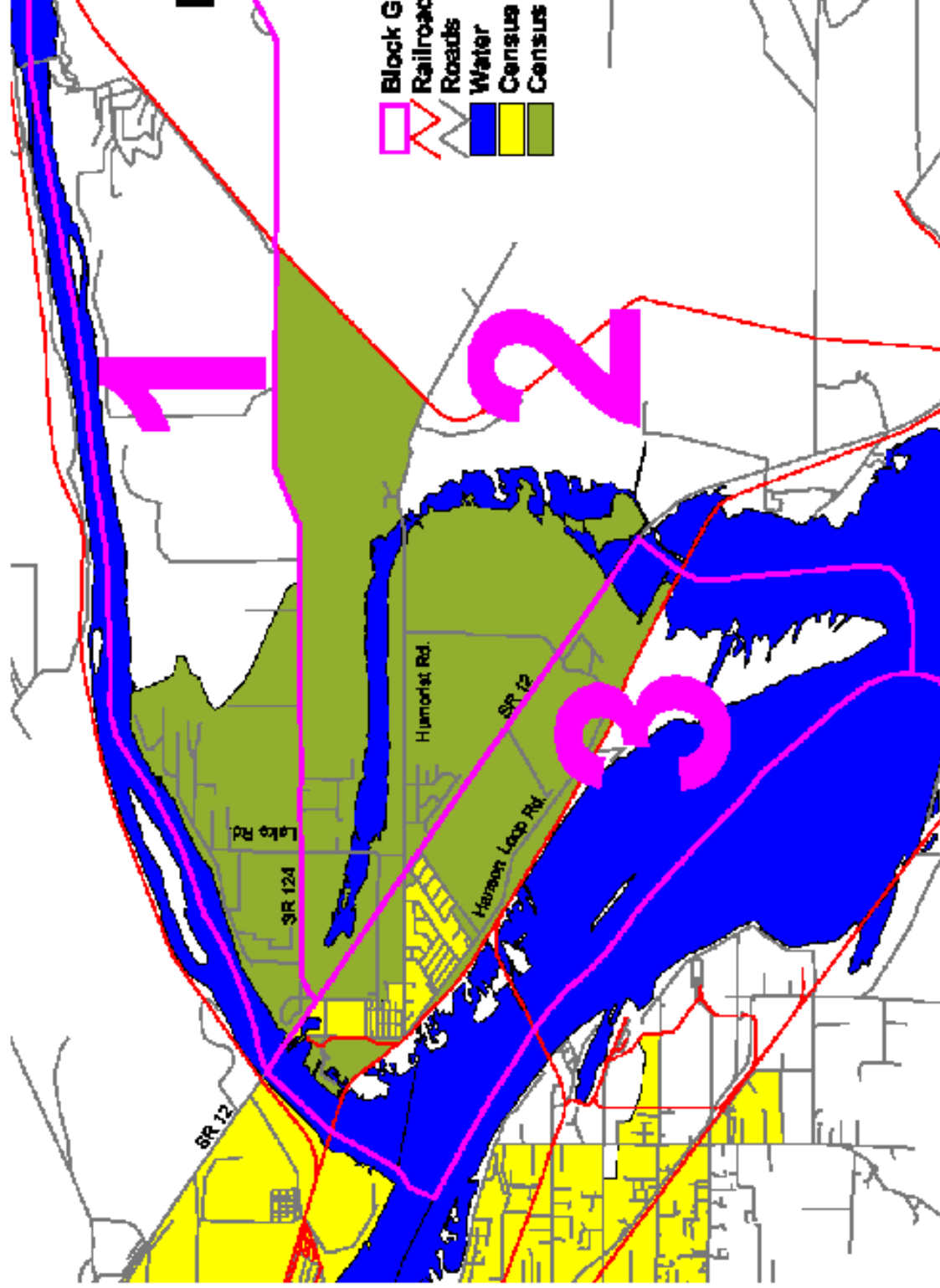
The Burbank Census Designated Place contained a population of 3,303, with 31 percent aged 17 and under and 5.7 percent in the 70 and over group. Households totaled 1,089 with 272 having an occupant aged 60 years or more. Workers totaled 1,551 with 1,420 working outside Walla Walla County (40 out of state). 1,303 were drive-alones; 129 carpooled; 9 used public transportation (vanpool?); 59 bicycled or walked; and 51 worked at home.

The Wallula Census Designated Place had a population of 227, with 42 percent aged 17 and under and 16.7 percent in the 70 and over group. There were 86 households. Workers totaled 73, with 62 driving alone and 11 carpooling.

The 2001 Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan addressed projected growth of new residents in the Burbank area. Based on historical growth rates approximately 1,555 more people will seek residence in the area by the year 2020. At an average of 2.475 persons per household, an increase of 1,555 people would require 629 new homes.

Future growth of the Wallula Townsite is expected to be limited in-fill development.

Burbank Census Block Groups



8 Miles

4

0

TABLE 1 – 2000 CENSUS DATA BY BLOCK GROUP

<u>Block Group 1</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Population	487	490	977
Under 5 years	22	28	50
5-17 years	119	107	226
18-59 years	278	283	561
60-69 years	35	34	69
70 & Over	33	38	71
Households			336
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			93
 Block Group 2	 <u>Male</u>	 <u>Female</u>	 <u>Total</u>
Population	544	520	1,064
Under 5 years	47	34	81
5-17 years	152	140	292
18-59 years	283	286	569
60-69 years	38	34	72
70 & Over	24	26	50
Households			326
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			82
 Block Group 3	 <u>Male</u>	 <u>Female</u>	 <u>Total</u>
Population	909	916	1,825
Under 5 years	66	73	139
5-17 years	209	219	428
18-59 years	543	513	1,056
60-69 years	53	56	109
70 & Over	38	55	93
Households			612
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			147
 <u>STUDY AREA TOTALS</u>			
Population			3,866
Age 17 & Under			1,216
Age 18-69			2,436
Age 70 & Over			214
Households			1,274
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			322

TABLE 2 – 2000 CENSUS DATA BY CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACE (CDP)

<u>BURBANK CDP</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Population	1,653	1,650	3,303
Under 5 years	118	113	231
5-17 years	394	402	796
18-59 years	961	922	1,883
60-69 years	100	104	204
70 & Over	80	109	189
Households			1,089
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			272
Workers 16 years & Over			1,551
Work Outside County of Residence (In-State)			1,020
Work Outside State			40
Drove Alone			1,303
Carpooled			129
Public Transportation			9
Bicycle, Walk, Other			59
Work At Home			51
<u>WALLULA CDP</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Population	102	125	227
Under 5 years	8	10	18
5-17 years	45	33	78
18-59 years	41	52	93
60-69 years	0	0	0
70 & Over	8	30	38
Households			86
Households with Occupant 60 yrs. & Over			Unknown
Workers 16 years & Over			73
Drove Alone			62
Carpooled			11

THE PUBLIC SURVEY

A survey questionnaire was mailed to all addresses (1,537) through the Burbank (1,465) and Wallula (72) post offices. As shown below, the returns were 150 (10%) for the Burbank area and 11 (15%) for Wallula.

Of the 150 responses from the Burbank/Burbank Heights area, 110 (73 percent) indicated transit service was necessary and that they would use it. Of the 27 percent indicating they would not use transit services, a few indicated transit was necessary. Only ten of the responses were from the rural part of the study area. Fifty responses were from Burbank Heights and 69 from Burbank. Twenty-one from the area did not identify their household locations on the map.

TABLE 3 – PUBLIC SURVEY SUMMARY BY HOUSEHOLD

	<u>Burbank Area</u>	<u>Wallula</u>
Very Necessary – Will Use	60	2
Necessary – Will Use	43	8
Necessary – Will Not Use	7	
No Opinion On Need – Will Not Use	5	
Very Unnecessary – Will Not Use	27	1
Unnecessary – Will Not Use	8	
Total Responses	150	11

A copy of the Burbank area public survey questionnaire in the appendix provides more summary details. The 150 responses represented 302 individuals with 125 (41%) indicating no use of transit. Potential users were 19 daily, 75 2-3 days per week, 56 weekly, and 46 monthly. Trip purpose was 99 shopping, 55 recreation, 44 work, 23 school, and 58 other. Five, six, and seven day per week uses were nearly evenly indicated. Primary use was indicated to be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (125) and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. (48). A few indicated earlier or later hours of use.

Destinations were the Tri-Cities (157), Walla Walla (29), Burbank schools (18), Charbonneau (2), Ice Harbor (2), Boise's mill (2), Iowa Beef (2), and Hanford (2).

Special needs were bike racks on buses (20), assistance boarding (17), wheelchair lift (7), and assistance with exit and transfer decisions (4).

Of the 11 household responses from Wallula, one indicated transit service was unnecessary. The responses represented 21 individuals. Primary trip purposes were shopping (14), recreation (6), work (3), school (3), and other (10). Days of use were primarily Monday through Friday (11). Nine indicated the 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. time slot. The rest were scattered throughout the early and late hours.

POTENTIAL RIDERSHIP

Burbank respondents indicated the Tri-Cities as their primary destination (151). That would include about 36 daily work trips, 60 weekly shopping trips, 40 weekly recreation trips, and about 40 intermittent trips for other purposes. All assuming available service adequately met their needs. Trips to Burbank schools were earmarked by 18 students. Intermittent trips to Walla Walla were also indicated by 27 people.

Walla Walla residents also indicated the Tri-Cities as their primary destination (16), followed by Walla Walla (4) and Burbank (5). Daily trips would potentially include 3 students to Burbank and 3 workers to the Tri-Cities. Intermittent trips were indicated by individuals for recreation (6), shopping (14), and other purposes (10), most likely to the Tri-Cities. Again, assuming transit service adequately met their needs.

Perceived use of fixed route transit services assumes such service will fully meet an individual's needs (e.g. front door service at both ends of trips; timed when they need it; etc.). For the most part, all of an individual's needs will not be met. Consequently, actual ridership is usually less than surveys tend to indicate. Generally speaking, potential riders will not use transit service if they have to walk over one-quarter mile to access that service.

DISPOSABLE INCOME RATIONALE AND WHERE THE MONEY IS SPENT

The people in the study area do the majority of their shopping in the Tri-Cities. This is due to the close proximity to the Tri-Cities and the fact that businesses in Burbank are limited to a variety of specialty services and a few convenience stores. A look at household expenditures and where they occur would be a good measure of dollars generated to the public transit providers. In the Burbank situation, the sales tax revenue has gone directly to Ben Franklin Transit, yet the people of Burbank have no public transportation at this time. While these numbers are only approximations, they are based on the best available data and warrant some discussion.

Although Burbank residents are outside BFT's PTBA, they do contribute to the PTBA sales tax simply by conducting business in the Tri-Cities. Furthermore, many of them are now within the Tri-Cities census designated urbanized area, the population of which is the basis of the annual federal transit funding allocation to BFT.

According to Census 2000, median household income in the Burbank area fell between \$47,375 and \$51,771 during 1999. The U.S. Department of Labor's U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey details how the average household spends their income. We will look at estimates from the year 1999 since that is the year income data is available from Census 2000. According to the study, a household with an annual income of \$43,951 before taxes (which is slightly less than our study area) had expenditures of just under \$37,000. The retail taxable categories included in this about totaled roughly **\$14,500** per

household. If we were to multiply this amount by the 1274 households in our study area, we could estimate that \$18,473,000 was likely spent on taxable items during 1999. By deducting the \$2,000,000 actually spent within Burbank, we can estimate that over \$16 million in taxable sales were made outside the study area. If we were to assume that 70% of the retail purchases not made within the study area were actually made in the Tri-Cities (within the Ben Franklin Transit PTBA), we could estimate that \$11,531,100 in retail sales during 1999 could have been attributable to the people within the Burbank area. Under Ben Franklin Transit's current .6% rate, this scenario reflects \$69,187 in transit revenue that would be attributable to the people in the Burbank area.

TRANSIT SERVICE OPTIONS

Ben Franklin Transit PTBA Expansion

Expansion of BFT's Public Transportation Benefit Area to include Burbank would impose BFT's PTBA sales tax (0.6%) upon retail sales in the area. The Department of Revenue indicated Burbank area retail sales for 2001 approximated \$2 million. The PTBA sales tax would, therefore, yield about \$12,000 annually.

BFT's hourly operating costs are estimated at \$52 for a bus and \$42 for a dial-a-ride or demand response unit. At those rates, the PTBA sales tax would support only 230 hours of bus service or 285 hours of a demand response unit. That would equate to about three trips per week to the Tri-Cities.

Valley Transit PTBA Expansion

Adding Burbank to Valley's PTBA would impose their 0.3 percent tax for an annual yield of about \$6,000.

Valley's hourly operating costs are about \$70 for a fixed route bus and \$65 for a dial-a-ride unit. Therefore, the PTBA sales tax would support only about 86 hours of bus service or 92 hours of a dial-a-ride type unit.

A PTBA sales tax by Valley Transit (or Ben Franklin Transit) would preclude any other tax for transit purposes (RCW Section 82.14.045 (1)). Therefore, either transit agency would be taking on a nonself-supporting system expansion in Burbank if local service needs were met, necessitating the transit agency to subsidize that service.

Unincorporated Public Transit Benefit Area (UPTBA)

A potentially viable option would be for Walla Walla County to form a UPTBA. As lead agency, the county could contract with another agency to provide some form of service, likely at about half the overhead costs discussed for BFT or Valley services. A financially constrained option would be to acquire a suitable used vehicle(s), hire or seek a volunteer driver(s), and delegate oversight to someone local, such as the fire chief.

Seeking Rural Mobility Grant funding from the state for a demonstration project could potentially get a service up and running. Some form of voter approved local taxation could provide continued funding.

Since the public survey indicated the Tri-Cities as the primary destination, there is potential for some regularly scheduled service between Burbank and BFT's Adams-22nd Avenue Transit Center in Pasco. Riders could then transfer to the BFT bus of choice. On a less frequent basis, trips to Walla Walla could be a future option, potentially servicing people in Wallula, Touchet and Lowden as well.

Dial-A-Ride service has restricted rider eligibility requirements. General Public Demand Response Service is an unrestricted, flexible form of transportation, normally using small vehicles and open to all riders. There is potential in Burbank for demand response services. Since that service would respond only to demand, it would eliminate empty buses and keep operational costs down.

Any fixed route or demand response services could be supplemented with ridematching services for carpools to schools, employment sites and other locations.

FUNDING OPTIONS FOR A UPTBA

Household Tax

A household tax cannot exceed one dollar per month and would not apply to commercial or industrial facilities. (Refer to RCW Section 35.95.040, Paragraph 2.) With 1,089 households in the Burbank Census Designated Place, the maximum annual revenue yield from a household tax would approximate \$13,000.

Utility Tax

A utility tax could apply to all users, including commercial and industrial facilities. With no municipal services in the Burbank area, the most viable utility tax would be on electricity. A utility tax and a household tax could be applied simultaneously (RCW Sec. 35.95.040 Par. 3). However, a stand alone utility tax would likely have a better chance of voter approval. Columbia REA serves customers north of Burbank Slough, Pacific Power & Light has the balance of the study area.

The following Table 4 estimates **monthly** electric utility tax revenues for taxing rates ranging from one-half cent to one cent per kilowatt-hour for average households. The schools, commercial facilities, and other industrial sites would add to the potential revenues.

As shown in Table 5, Iowa Beef Products has 10-12 megawatt power service. Boise's mill has 75 megawatt service. Boise could, therefore, be using up to 75,000 kilowatt-hours per **hour**. That, when applying the \$0.005 per kwh utility tax rate, would result in an **hourly** utility tax of \$375 or \$3.28 million per year. The same rate applied to Iowa Beef would garner over \$525,000 per year. Obviously, a much lower tax rate or monthly flat fee (assuming legality) should be considered industrial users. Those flat rates should not be excessive and should not be a deterrent to industrial recruiting efforts by the county or the port.

TABLE 4 – HOUSEHOLD MONTHLY ELECTRIC UTILITY TAX
(Avg. 1,200 kwh/Month)

	Households	\$0.005 Per kwh	\$0.006 Per kwh	\$0.007 Per kwh	\$0.008 Per kwh	\$0.009 Per kwh	\$0.01 Per kwh
Entire Study Area	1,274	\$7,644	\$9,173	\$10,702	\$12,230	\$13,759	\$15,288
Burbank Census Designated Place	1,089	\$6,534	\$7,841	\$9,148	\$10,454	\$11,761	\$13,068
Wallula Census Designated Place	86	\$516	\$619	\$722	\$826	\$929	\$1,032
Average Monthly Cost Per Household	1	\$6.00	\$7.20	\$8.40	\$9.60	\$10.80	\$12.00

TABLE 5 – MAJOR INDUSTRY HOURLY ELECTRIC UTILITY TAX

	\$0.005 Per kwh	\$0.006 Per kwh	\$0.007 Per kwh	\$0.008 Per kwh	\$0.009 Per kwh	\$0.01 Per kwh
Iowa Beef Products (12,000 kwh Per Hour)	\$60	\$72	\$84	\$96	\$108	\$120
Boise (75,000 kwh Per Hour)	\$375	\$450	\$525	\$600	\$675	\$750

Federal/State Grants

Federal Sec. 5307 funds are annually allocated to Ben Franklin Transit, based on the census urbanized area population for the Tri-Cities. That census urbanized area now includes part of Burbank. However, BFT is under no obligation to expand their services into that unincorporated area. They are likewise not required to share any nominal Sec. 5307 funding, attributable to that Burbank population, with any transit agency or system that may form in Burbank.

The Federal Section 5311 Program authorizes states to use funds for provision of local public transportation service in non-urbanized areas.

The Federal Section 5311 (f) Program (The Intercity Bus Grant Program) provides funding to establish, preserve, and enhance rural and small urban intercity transportation.

The WSDOT Rural Mobility Grant Program provides funding to establish, preserve, and improve public transportation in and between rural communities. The Paratransit Grant Program similarly funds services for the special needs segment of the population. Funding of either of these state programs is subject to a tight state budget and legislative approval.

CONCLUSIONS

PTBA Expansion (BFT or Valley Transit)

- Generates little revenue & service
- Would need to be subsidized by greater transit service area
- Scheduled service – Burbank to Pasco transfer center
- Future potential service to Walla Walla via Wallula, Touchet, Lowden
- Demand response service may be feasible

Unincorporated PTBA

- Viable
- Scheduled service – Burbank to Pasco
- Future potential service to Walla Walla
- Demand response service may be feasible
- Potential state grant – Start up funds
- Utility tax – Long-term funding

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The BFCG staff held two public meetings at the Columbia High School library on December 11, 2002. Sessions were held from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Eight individuals were present for the afternoon session, 13 in the evening. At both sessions, staff made 20-minute presentations (e.g. overview of this report), followed by group interaction. The attendance roster is in the appendix.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

A grass roots citizen effort would be needed before an unincorporated PTBA or other form of public transportation could potentially come to fruition. Formation of a citizen's steering committee would be a good first step. That group could 1.) Compose a petition to the county seeking formation of a local transit benefit area and seeking placement of a utility tax measure on the next election ballot to finance transit operations or 2.) Petition the county for low-key county funded service (scheduled and/or demand response). The county would have the option of contracting for services through another public or private provider.

A third option would be for a citizens committee to petition to Ben Franklin Transit or Valley Transit for PTBA expansion and service in Burbank. (Would require approval of Walla Walla County.) Burbank residents already contribute to BFT through their retail shopping in the Tri-Cities. Furthermore, many of them are now within the Tri-Cities census designated urbanized area, the population of which is the basis of the annual federal transit funding allocation to BFT.

Registered voters in the local districts are: Burbank - 917, McNary - 385, Ice Harbor - 538 and Wallula - 92. Any citizen petitions should be segregated by voting district and must collect signatures of at least ten percent of those registered voters in a district before the county considers putting a taxing measure on their next ballot. Passage or failure of a

subsequent taxing measure in a district would be key to defining the limits of any potential transit service area.

“APPENDIX”

RCW 36.57.100

Counties authorized to perform public transportation function in unincorporated areas -- Exceptions.

Every county, except a county in which a metropolitan municipal corporation is performing the public transportation function as of July 1, 1975, is authorized to perform such function in such portions of the unincorporated areas of the county, except within the boundaries of a public transportation benefit area established pursuant to chapter [36.57A](#) RCW, as the county legislative body shall determine and the county shall have those powers as are specified in RCW [36.57.040](#) with respect to the provision of public transportation as is authorized pursuant to RCW [36.57.040](#).

[1975 1st ex.s. c 270 § 9.]

NOTES:

Severability -- Effective date -- 1975 1st ex.s. c 270: See notes following RCW [35.58.272](#).

RCW 36.57.110

Boundaries of unincorporated transportation benefit areas.

The legislative body of any county is hereby authorized to create and define the boundaries of unincorporated transportation benefit areas within the unincorporated areas of the county, following school district or election precinct lines, as far as practicable. Such areas shall include only those portions of the unincorporated area of the county which could reasonably assume to benefit from the provision of public transportation services.

[1975 1st ex.s. c 270 § 10.]

NOTES:

Severability -- Effective date -- 1975 1st ex.s. c 270: See notes following RCW [35.58.272](#).

TABLE – BURBANK/BURBANK HEIGHTS PUBLIC SURVEY SUMMARY

2. How necessary is it, in your opinion, to have public transit service in the following areas (Please mark appropriate boxes.)

	1. Very Necessary	2. Necessary	3. Unnecessary	4. Very Unnecessary	5. No Opinion
A. Burbank	60	39	7	26	6
B. Burbank Heights	42	30	9	27	5
C. Wallula	26	23	7	25	15

3. Assuming that a bus system can serve some of the travel needs of the members of your household, please answer the following questions for each person in the household.

[illegible]

4. For any household members you indicated would use transit, please indicate their destinations (for example, Iowa Beef, Boise's mill, Burbank High School, Tri-Cities, Walla Walla, Charbonneau, Ice Harbor, Vista Hermosa, etc.).

Person:

1. Tri-Cities – 157 Walla Walla - 29

2. Burbank Schools – 18 Buise Mill - 2

3. Charbonneau – 2 Iowa Beef - 2

4. Ice Harbor - 2

5. Hanford - 2

5. For any household members you indicated would use transit, please indicate any special needs by placing their person number in the appropriate boxes.

☐

Bike rack on bus

☐

Assistance to board

☐

Wheelchair lift

☐

Other (Explain) Exit/Transfer Decisions
